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Fifty-ninth session

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19th plenary meeting
Monday, 4 October 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 52 and 54 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354)

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We welcome this joint debate, since we believe that United Nations reform must be comprehensive in order to be successful. While the Secretariat of the Organization continues to do its part with regard to reform and has achieved significant improvements over the past few years, we as Member States continue to lag behind in our own efforts. I will therefore concentrate my remarks on the intergovernmental area.

Mr. President, thanks to the hard work and leadership of your predecessor, President Julian Hunte, which led to the adoption of two resolutions in December 2003 and July 2004, a process of General Assembly revitalization deserving of that name is finally under way. The revitalization process has received a jump-start that we must translate into action so as to achieve further progress leading up to the anniversary session and the major event in 2005.

After the adoption of the second resolution on revitalization by the General Assembly in July, we were among the Member States that expressed concern that the measures agreed upon did not go far enough. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the package adopted goes far beyond earlier initiatives. After many years of frustration and stalemate, we now have reason to believe that change is indeed possible.

Some of the measures adopted address areas of particular importance, such as cooperation with the Security Council; more use of interactive debates and informal briefings; monitoring of the follow-up of resolutions; and reduction of the unworkable load of documentation and of the number of resolutions.

These decisions need to pass the test of practical application in the daily workings of this Assembly. We have reached a sound common understanding of what is needed, but this understanding will have the desired effect only if we also agree on the ways to put it into practice. Our next target date is April 2005, and we believe that we must concentrate our efforts on further streamlining the agenda, as well as reducing documentation and the number of resolutions this Assembly adopts.

The resolutions on revitalization also call on the Main Committees to contribute their share to the process. In the preparation of the work of the Committees for this session, the spirit of revitalization can already be felt. We hope that this spirit will be reinforced during the coming months and will lead to greater efficiency in the work of the Committees. Resolution 58/316 requests the Secretary-General to report on all aspects of the implementation of the agreed measures in September 2005. This is crucial in order to sustain the momentum and to ensure

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appropriate follow-up and completion of the reform measures. The report on the success of the measures taken so far should be comprehensive, and it should trigger an irreversible process. We hope that this debate will help carry the momentum on revitalization for the coming months.

In the interplay of the main organs of the United Nations, this Assembly should play a crucial role. It was conceived as the most important part of a system of checks and balances, but it no longer fulfils this function effectively. This is particularly lamentable at a time when the Security Council is more active than ever and reaching into novel areas, such as law-making. Meanwhile, the General Assembly, the organ designed for inclusiveness and transparency and which should provide a certain counterbalance to the Council, is far from using all its powers effectively and efficiently. This is a dangerous development that jeopardizes the institutional and political balance forming the basis of genuine multilateralism.

The General Assembly, as a result of the process of revitalization, must again find its role as the prime representative of the United Nations membership in a system of checks and balances among the different organs. In this respect, the year 2005 will be our next destination. It is clear that 2005 will bring about a major event, and it will be marked by great political momentum. In terms of reform, this momentum must not only be directed at the reform of the Security Council. The big dividing lines will not become smaller if we concentrate our efforts on this single issue, important as it is, without looking at other aspects.

Enlargement of the Security Council is naturally the talk of the day, as the just-concluded general debate illustrated very clearly. However, enlargement of the Council alone will not make this Organization stronger and more effective, so we must continue to look at the overall picture, in which the interplay of the main organs and thus the role of this Assembly play a decisive role. We hope that the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will be a source of inspiration and provide political momentum to streamline the reform process and move it in a good direction.

We appreciate the excellent work done by the Secretary-General on a great number of issues, in particular in the implementation of his 2002 report on the strengthening of the United Nations. In many respects, the Secretariat has been more capable of internal reform then we, the Member States, have been at the intergovernmental level. We appreciate in particular the fact that the United Nations system presents itself in a clearer and more accessible manner and that improvements have been made in the budget cycle.

We also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Fréchette, for presenting the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. We agree that we have to make the United Nations a more outward-looking organization that connects the global with the local. Better interaction with civil society, as well as with other relevant actors such as regional organizations, the private sector and the media, is an important step in that direction.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): Last week, we all witnessed a broad discussion on the issue of the strengthening of the role of the United Nations, involving heads of State and Government and foreign ministers. A common understanding of the need to constantly adapt the Organization to the changing world around us so that it can meet the challenges of our time is an important outcome of that debate.

It has been said many times, and never better than by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, that in order to make our Organization more effective and efficient, we must be well-prepared to change with the times, constantly adjusting to complex international challenges. But we cannot meet the new challenges and address the acute problems of today by continuing to rely on old approaches. The central issue of international relations is to turn the United Nations into an effective tool designed to strengthen regional and global security systems, including the regime of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and to manage globalization processes. Member States should provide the Organization with all the necessary resources, so that it can perform its multiple tasks effectively.

As a matter of principle, we consider it important to ensure a balance in the functioning of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as envisioned in the Charter of this Organization. We insist on the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly in settling the most important issues facing humanity today. In our view,

the efforts of the international community to combat terrorism and to settle armed conflicts can be made more effective only on the basis of such an approach.

From the very beginning, Kazakhstan has supported the Secretary-General's decision to establish a high-level panel on United Nations reform. We believe that the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, with its broad mandate, will arrive at an acceptable solution to this crucial issue of today. We are looking forward to the Panel's report containing recommendations on the changes we need to make for the Organization to be effective against the threats of the twenty-first century. Kazakhstan is ready to be actively involved in the discussion of that important document.

Regional arrangements play an increasingly important role in the collective security system. Better coordination between them and the United Nations will go a long way towards building up the capacity for effective response in the field. In this context, Kazakhstan calls for the establishment of a council of regional organizations, under the auspices of the Secretary-General. We also believe that that proposal reflects the need to strengthen global multilateral cooperation.

General Assembly resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which are aimed at enhancing the authority of the Assembly, confirmed the fundamental role of this Organization in international affairs. They gave a clear indication of the Assembly's recognition that, for the United Nations, reform must be an ongoing process and that the General Assembly must turn the spotlight of reform on itself.

We take note of the fact that there has been some progress in the revitalization of the General Assembly and the improvement of its methods of work. At the same time, we believe that this process should not undercut the thrust of the reforms designed primarily to strengthen the authority of the Assembly and to improve the effectiveness of its actions. We must bear in mind that decisions leading to adjustments to the agenda are among the most sensitive that Member States have to make.

We commend you, Mr. President, for your resolve to continue to press ahead with the General Assembly reform initiatives that were approved late last year. We share the view that every effort must be made to halt the erosion of the strengths of the Assembly as the major United Nations forum for debating international issues.

The Secretary-General has made it clear that improved relations between the United Nations and civil society is an important element of the programme of reform. To that end, he appointed the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations.

We welcome the report prepared by the Panel, which has made a valuable contribution to the reform process of the United Nations. It offers innovative ideas aimed at strengthening partnership with civil society in humanitarian and development activities and contains concrete measures to increase the participation of civil society in the work of the United Nations.

The Panel makes a compelling case for the United Nations to become a more outward-looking Organization and connect the global with the local. We also believe that expanding and deepening the relationship with non-governmental organizations will further strengthen the intergovernmental debates on global issues.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Kazakhstan will continue to exert every effort to ensure that the Organization occupies its rightful place in world affairs.

Mr. Kim Sam-hoon (Republic of Korea): During the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Member States deliberated at length on ways to revitalize the General Assembly. Although resolutions 58/316 and 58/126 were not as comprehensive as we had initially hoped they would be, the Republic of Korea is nonetheless pleased with the progress that has been made as a result. For example, the Office of the President of the General Assembly has been considerably strengthened, in line with part A, paragraph 10, of the annex to resolution 58/126. Moreover, beginning this year, the agenda of the General Assembly is being organized under headings corresponding to the priorities of the Organization, which has made it significantly more approachable and accessible.

Nevertheless, despite this progress there is more work to be done. It is vital that we maintain the momentum for change. As the Republic of Korea addressed the broad issue of General Assembly

revitalization during the fifty-eighth session, I would now like to highlight specific areas of reform that we believe should be addressed during the fifty-ninth session.

First, we would like to stress the importance of allowing the General Committee to play the leading role in advising the General Assembly on the efficient organization, coordination and management of its work, as stated in part E, paragraph 5 (b) of the annex to resolution 58/316. The General Committee must meet regularly, and we would like to see the President continue to remain actively involved in the work of the General Committee.

More specifically, we would like to see the General Committee consider the biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination customary agenda items and to make recommendations as soon as possible. As Member States have made clear, the rationalization of the agenda must be an ongoing process.

Secondly, we recall that document A/58/CRP.7, on control and limitation on documentation, was not adequately discussed during the previous session. We hope that it will become a major item for discussion during the fifty-ninth session. As document A/58/CRP.7 correctly notes, the sheer volume of documentation required from the Secretariat is preventing it from offering value-added and in-depth analysis on important subject matter. Indeed, last year alone the United Nations produced no less than 318 different resolutions — a truly mind-boggling number. It has become almost impossible for Member States to effectively absorb what is being provided. Therefore, there must be serious discussions on ways to curtail the quantity, length and frequency of documentation, and we hope that concrete and effective measures in this respect are taken during the fifty-ninth session.

Thirdly, as stated in part A, paragraph 6 of the annex to resolution 58/126, we urge the President of the General Assembly to meet regularly, perhaps once every month, with the Presidents of both the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. We believe that that practice would not only strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly but also allow for better coordination among the major organs of the United Nations.

Fourthly, the Republic of Korea would like to see more interactive debates take place during discussions, not only in the Main Committees but also during General Committee meetings. We hope that, as outlined in resolution 58/316, a revitalized General Committee will soon recommend to the General Assembly a programme and format for such interactive debates.

On the issue of strengthening the United Nations system, while my delegation recognizes that the issue of civil society participation at the United Nations has a long and complex history, we concur with the Secretary-General that expanding and deepening the relationship with non-governmental organizations will further strengthen the United Nations and the intergovernmental debates on issues of global import.

Thus we welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/59/354) and commend the efforts of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, led by former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, on which the Secretary-General's report is based. In general, we find the recommendations contained in the report to be comprehensive and forward-looking in making the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the United Nations more meaningful and responsive to the changing needs and expectations of both global and civil society. We will carefully study the recommendations with a view to working with others to turn them into concrete action.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea believes that the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system must be an ongoing and dynamic process. Member States must look beyond their own individual priorities towards the greater collective good if we are to truly strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of this global body. The General Assembly is the sole global forum in which all nations and peoples have a voice; we must never allow that voice to be muffled due to organizational inefficiencies. The Republic of Korea pledges its full support for the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system, and we urge Member States to sustain the momentum of reform.

Mr. Mwangi (Kenya): Mr. President, my delegation wishes once again to extend its congratulations to you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. We look forward to fruitful deliberations under

your stewardship. Kenya appreciates the excellent work carried out by your predecessor, especially with regard to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system.

Over the years, the General Assembly has grappled with the issue of its own revitalization. As the Assembly has been overburdened by its own agenda, it is gratifying to note that, during the last session, efforts were expended to cluster, biannualize, triannualize and even eliminate items on the customary agenda of the Assembly. This was in accordance with part B, paragraph 5, of the annex to resolution 58/126, which postulated that:

> "It would be advantageous for the General Assembly to have a shorter agenda to ensure the fullest discussions of all issues, so that its decisions may have greater impact."

That is the direction we need to take.

As regards the Main Committees, Kenya supports the rescheduling of the work of the Committees and the idea of conceptualizing the agenda around the priorities of the Organization. My delegation believes that improved procedures and working methods as well as the rationalization of the agenda of the Main Committees would be an important step towards the revitalization of the Assembly.

Improving procedures and working methods is not an end in itself. It is also important to examine ways and means of enhancing the capacity of the Secretariat to enable it to serve the aspirations of the Main Committees. The Secretariat should therefore be provided with the requisite resources and personnel for it to perform as expected. The Secretariat's ability to generate documents on time has, in the recent past, been seriously constrained. Documentation delays prevent Main Committees from discharging their work smoothly and in a timely fashion. This is an area we need to streamline with a view to taking remedial steps.

We decry the continuing emasculation of the General Assembly by other organs of the Organization. In the process of the reinvention of the United Nations, the starting point should be the General Assembly itself. It should regain its role as the principal decision-making and policy-making body. Far-reaching decisions that have great impact on global affairs must be made by the voice of the majority. That voice can be found only in the General Assembly. Multilateralism should prevail.

With regard to the Security Council, my delegation believes that it should be transparent, responsive and democratized in order to meet the security threats of the twenty-first century. The Economic and Social Council has to undergo drastic surgery for it to meet the ever-changing economic and social challenges, particularly those in developing countries. The Council should meet more frequently and establish closer working relations in coordination with international financial institutions, specialized agencies and United Nations programmes. The United Nations institutions should find a new synergy so that they can work for the betterment of humankind in the areas of peace, sustainable development and human dignity.

Concerning the strengthening of the United Nations, Kenya supports and welcomes the efforts made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in this area. We urge him to continue to pursue efforts to explore and establish mutually beneficial relations with non-traditional groups and bodies. The recent report of the high-level Panel on civil society is clear case in point of the efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations system. The report contains positive suggestions as to how the United Nations could maximize the potential of civil society to improve the effectiveness of the international system. Though the overall report is commendable, some of the recommendations still require our concerted assessment and review. For instance, the recommendation on the relationship of civil society vis-à-vis the General Assembly could, in our view, contravene Article 71 of the United Nations Charter.

My delegation welcomes the appointment of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established by the Secretary-General during the previous session of the General Assembly. It is our expectation that, when the Panel delivers its report at the end of the year, its verdict will revolutionize the current state of the United Nations. The panel consulted widely, and we expect that the views expressed — particularly those of the developing countries, which form the majority of the membership — will be taken into consideration.

In conclusion, Kenya is fully committed to the process of the revitalization of the Organization. My delegation would like to see a strong United Nations with the capacity to effectively and efficiently moderate the delicate, multifaceted and rapid changes the world is experiencing. The United Nations has to be vibrant and reassert itself in its inherent role of maintaining global peace and security on the one hand and enhancing accelerated economic development on the other.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to strengthening and reforming the United Nations. On the eve of its sixtieth anniversary, the Organization's relevance with respect to the modern realities of international politics and its capacity to play the central role in overcoming global threats and challenges of the twenty-first century have posed sharper and pivotal questions.

Belarus supports the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at improving the Organization's activities through encouraging dialogue among States on the major aspects of reform. Following the presentation of the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change we expect broad consultations with Member States will be organized to discuss the report's recommendations for transforming the Organization and improving its activities in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today no one doubts the need to modernize the United Nations in order to deal effectively with the tasks before it in the twenty-first century. The only doubt concerns the inevitability and real need for fundamental institutional change of the United Nations system — with the exception of the question of enlargement of the Security Council — and the necessity of reconsidering the basic principles of the United Nations activities enshrined in its Charter. The existing mechanisms of the Charter, in particular in the field of maintenance of international peace and security, have proved to be quite viable and the possibilities for their adaptation to the changing international situation have not been exhausted.

The basic tenet of Belarus's position on the problem of United Nations reform is that the intention should not be to belittle the significance of the principles of the Charter or seek to revise them. That approach is by no means an expression of conservatism, but, rather, a reflection of our country's desire to enhance the integrity of the fundamental basis of the Organization, which is an important prerequisite for the peaceful coexistence of States and the attainment of a just international order.

Further to the approach we have outlined, Belarus, together with other Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, sponsored a draft resolution, entitled "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation", which was adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session as resolution 58/317. That resolution is a significant instrument for finding ways to increase the efficacy of the United Nations and helped to elaborate guidelines for the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change in preparing its reform proposals.

In the context of the Secretary-General's efforts towards strengthening and democratizing the United Nations, our delegation on the whole has a positive assessment of the outcome of deliberations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. At the same time, it is critical to note that broadening of interaction of the United Nations with non-governmental organizations should be organized in such a manner as not to put in doubt the role of the United Nations as an effective forum of intergovernmental communication.

The delegation of Belarus would like to draw attention to such promising developments towards the revitalization of the United Nations activities and its democratization as the creation of mechanisms to expand the participation of parliamentarians in the activities of the Organization. At present, the Inter-Parliamentary Union positively contributes to the development of contacts between parliamentarians and the United Nations through the annual parliamentary hearings held during the substantive part of the General Assembly session. Other means of enhancing the parliamentary dimension in United Nations activities, particularly in the work of its principal representative organ, the General Assembly, could also be developed.

Revitalization of work of the General Assembly is one of the major focuses of the process of strengthening and reforming the United Nations. We welcome the steps undertaken at the fifty-eighth

session by the previous President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, in order to stimulate discussion on how to revitalize the work of the General Assembly and increase its authority within the United Nations system. General Assembly resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 established a good basis for us to continue our work during this session on further measures to strengthen the status of the General Assembly and on laying the groundwork for the effective implementation of its authority under the Charter.

The General Assembly is the main representative organ of the United Nations, whose capacity must be fully utilized for the interests of advocating a multilateral approach to the resolution of international problems. While advocating the process of revitalization of the General Assembly, the Republic of Belarus would warn against its bureaucratization and an unjustifiably increased burden on the United Nations budget as a consequence of reform measures.

We propose a comprehensive analysis of the consequences for the entire United Nations system resulting from the possible change in the schedule of work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. We share the opinion that any reordering of the schedules of work of all six Committees is advisable within the traditional period of their functioning, from September to December.

Therefore, we call upon you, Mr. President, to concentrate your efforts on solving the priority problems related to the revitalization of the General Assembly. In that regard, Belarus considers priority should be given to further measures to improve the working methods of the Assembly by optimizing and rationalizing the agenda, by refraining from the practice of adopting overlapping and repeating resolutions, by cutting down the length of debates on agenda items and by placing emphasis on the quality of resolutions.

Belarus backs the measures aimed at strengthening the status of the General Assembly among the major organs of the United Nations system, as well as reconsidering its current relations with other principal statutory organs. We consider that the establishment of a mechanism of coordination between the presidents of the General Assembly, Security Council and Economic and Social Council, in conformity with resolution 58/126, will constitute a first practical step towards the enhancement of the authority of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, allow me to reassure you, Mr. President, that the delegation of Belarus intends to cooperate fully in the task of elaborating positive, generally acceptable ways to strengthen the Organization and revitalize its General Assembly.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): The representative of Algeria spoke this morning on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and we support his statement. We only wish now to add a few points of emphasis from the standpoint of the delegation of Jamaica.

The primacy of the General Assembly and its central place as the chief deliberative organ of the United Nations is established in the Charter. To strengthen the United Nations and to strengthen multilateralism we should regard revitalization of the General Assembly as a major priority.

During the past session under the energetic leadership of the outgoing President, the process was advanced by the adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which contain provisions to improve working relations between the various organs, to organize and rationalize the agenda, to improve working methods and to strengthen the office of the presidency. As this is an evolving process there is unfinished business to be worked on during this session, principally in three areas.

First, there is a need to reorder the work of the General Assembly to spread its work over the year and to dilute concentration at the autumn session. This has the advantage of extending the activity of the Assembly and allowing for an increased level of participation by all delegations. We realize that there are different options which should be considered, and which are viable alternatives to the holding of two main sessions, which we still regard as being the best option.

The second area is the reform of the mandate and composition of the General Committee to improve its capability to manage and direct the work of the Assembly. Finally, there is need for further work on rationalizing the agenda and for improving methods of work.

Beyond those structural changes, there are actions at the level of Member States which should be taken to invigorate the Assembly.

First, the Assembly should debate topical issues facing the international community, while respecting the narrow limitations of Article 12 of the Charter. As the voice of the international community, the General Assembly should be convened more frequently to give expression to world opinion on the critical issues of the day. The Charter and rules of procedure provide for this and only requires the political action of Member States.

The second area is improvement in the quality of resolutions which should be less repetitive, with more substantive content concerning their pronouncements on current developments.

The third area is movement towards a more interactive framework for discussions and away from the current dull monotony of formal statements. Tradition is hard to break but innovative techniques can be tried to enliven the debates in the Main Committees.

The fourth area is implementation. The norms and policies established by the General Assembly should be implemented. Although these may not be legally binding, the moral force of world opinion should be respected and special monitoring should be arranged by the Secretariat and reflected in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Assembly.

Turning now to the agenda item on the strengthening of the United Nations system, we have some preliminary remarks on the report of the Secretary-General concerning the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354).

We wish to join in acknowledging the importance of engagement with civil society and the value of the contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to United Nations activities. They have an important role to play in promoting the goals of the United Nations and in providing innovative ideas and expertise, especially from those NGOs which have a specialized focus. We are therefore in general support of enhancing their involvement.

Having said that, we have to be careful that in the process, we avoid compromising the intergovernmental nature of our Organization. In that context, we have concerns about how NGO participation can be worked out in deliberations of the more political organs of the United Nations System.

Experience has shown that in the area of economic and social development the contribution of NGO participation has the greatest potential. However, some problems have arisen in the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, because the levels of politicalization of its activities have given rise to some concern. For that reason, we believe that in any new initiatives for participation in the two major political organs there is need to proceed with caution. Sensitive issues arise where political agendas are pursued by certain NGOs which lead to complications in relation to the internal affairs of States.

The second area of concern is the issue of compliance with the rules of engagement. The Economic and Social Council has faced difficulties with enforcement of the rules, especially where political encouragement is given to NGOs to agitate against Member States. This sometimes has proven to be disruptive. These concerns led us to express some reservations with regard to the proposals concerning NGOs in relation to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In our view, Sir, we should continue to develop the programme for civil society participation in relation to the activities of the Economic and Social Council and the related conferences of the United Nations in which NGOs participation has been constructive and valuable.

Using that approach, we are inclined to give support to the initiatives proposed in part VI of the Secretary-General's report (A/59/354) and to encourage more engagement with NGOs at the country level. That is an important means of promoting the objectives of the United Nations, especially in achieving the social and economic objectives of the United Nations. We believe that is where the emphasis should be placed at this time.

Finally, with respect to partnerships, there are still a number of questions which need clarification about how partnerships are to be implemented. Those relate principally to issues of process and accountability. It is not clear how they are to be monitored in the intergovernmental context and we have concerns how they will relate to the traditional channels for development cooperation.

These are matters in which we expect to have further consultations conducted under your auspices. We have confidence in your leadership in carrying

forward the process of reform and revitalization. You can count on the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Jamaica.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): I should like to associate my delegation with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on agenda item 52 entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", in his capacity as coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) working group on reform of the United Nations and revitalization of the General Assembly.

I join him and other speakers in paying tribute to His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, for his energetic leadership on the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

We now look towards your leadership and vision, Sir, in bringing forward the ongoing process to which Mr. Hunte had given great impetus and commitment. My delegation stands ready to support you in your efforts.

Leaders who spoke at the general debate over the past two weeks had overwhelmingly expressed their support for the need to reform the United Nations and strengthen the Organization to enable it to face threats and challenges of the twenty-first century. Further to the call for reform and the strengthening of the United Nations, Member States have also raised questions pertaining to the General Assembly and its role within the framework of the United Nations system.

The role of the General Assembly has been clearly outlined in Chapter IV of the Charter. As reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative body of the United Nations. The Assembly should be the true symbol of multilateralism that embodies the set of ideals and principles which Member States depend upon.

The General Assembly has adopted resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 as a means to revitalize the General Assembly, enhance its authority and role and improve its methods of work. Malaysia reaffirms its support for the work done thus far. We concur with the points raised earlier by Algeria on how we should move forward. There is certainly an urgent need to ensure the effective, full and proper implementation of the two resolutions.

It is true that, prior to resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, other resolutions to revitalize the General Assembly had been adopted and some improvements to the workings of the General Assembly had been achieved. However, there are still many other areas that have yet to be addressed. The key to success lies in the implementation of those resolutions. That aspect should be stressed above all else. A proper monitoring mechanism must be put in place to ensure that General Assembly resolutions are implemented. We must find ways of ensuring that the Assembly's decisions and recommendations are pursued, complied with and sincerely and wholeheartedly implemented by all parties concerned. Sponsors of resolutions could play a more responsible role in ensuring not only ownership, but also follow-up, accountability and implementation. The role of the Secretariat is also crucial in that regard.

In continuing our work on the process of revitalizing the General Assembly, my delegation believes in the need to also focus on the following: strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly; improvement in the methods of work; further rationalization of the agenda, resolutions and reports; and streamlining of the work of the main Committees in keeping with the General Assembly rules of procedure.

With regard to agenda item 54, my delegation recalls General Assembly resolution 58/269 of 23 December 2003, regarding strengthening of the United Nations, which focuses on improving the methods of work and practices of the United Nations. We believe that all Member States should continue to seriously look into the urgent implementation of the recommendations made under that resolution, especially on the full participation of the Member States in the planning, programming and budgetary process of the United Nations.

We should emphasize here that the United Nations system is essentially an intergovernmental institution. However, we note the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding the involvement of non-governmental organizations on issues of mutual dialogue, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354) in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. We are willing to further examine those recommendations with other delegations and the Secretariat.

Malaysia continues to fully subscribe to the position of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the strengthening of the United Nations, as stated in the final document of the thirteenth NAM Summit, held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003, and the final document of the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban in August 2004. The issue is addressed in the NAM documents in a more all-encompassing manner not restricted to questions relating to the improvement of procedures and methods of work in the United Nations organs.

The Non-Aligned Movement is focused on the larger picture of the need to reform and strengthen the United Nations system as a whole. It calls for a comprehensive reform of all United Nations organs, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. This is in order to uphold the centrality of the United Nations in current global affairs, as envisaged under the Charter, especially in the maintenance of international peace and security and in promoting international cooperation. This is even more relevant today in view of the many new challenges facing the Organization. My delegation looks forward to the opportunity at this session to further discuss the relevant issues relating to this question.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): Since I am taking the floor for the first time at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uganda and on my own account, to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of this world Assembly. I have every confidence in your proven skills and guidance.

The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/58/817 and Corr.1) is thoughtful and contains good recommendations. I congratulate the members of the Panel for work well done. I also congratulate the Secretary-General for his excellent report (A/59/354). Time does not permit me to give my detailed views on these reports.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector generally play a vital role in forging useful partnerships with Governments to realize development goals and other goals of the United Nations, especially at the grass-roots level. However, as important as that role is, NGOs should not be elevated to the level of Governments. They are not accountable to the people, as responsible Governments are. Their mandate is, thus, limited in character. Their role should be of a consultative nature. I therefore do not accept the proposal by the Secretary-General to give NGOs accreditation to directly participate in the sessions of the General Assembly. The General Assembly is a world inter-governmental parliament, and its members are duly accredited Government delegations from Member States.

That said, the important role played by NGOs in advancing the work of the United Nations can hardly be overemphasized. At the country level, NGOs of different categories play a useful role in realizing the Millennium Development Goals. They are engaged, for instance, in providing safe drinking water, sanitation, health clinics, microcredit facilities to women, literacy and immunization campaigns, HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and humanitarian assistance, especially in war-torn areas. I welcome the Panel's recommendation of extending consultations at the country level. Through workshops and other forums, NGOs can engage in dialogue with various United Nations agencies, coordinated by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Coordinators on the one hand and Governments on the other. In this regard, the Panel's recommendation to strengthen the capacity of UNDP Resident Coordinators to bolster the capacity of NGOs to render useful advisory services is welcome, especially if they form advisory groups or committees.

At the General Assembly level, consultations and dialogue with civil society have often taken the form of panel and roundtable discussions, usually through the Main Committees or sessions of the Economic and Social Council and its functional Commissions. I would propose, however, that a consultative forum be created in which Member States can interact with civil society on particular topics under consideration by the General Assembly on the margins of Assembly sessions, rather than before the sessions begin, as is proposed by the Secretary-General. That would minimize the expense of hosting two consecutive sessions.

I commend the Security Council for instituting a dialogue with civil society. Participation by civil society representatives in open debate on some issues has made a useful contribution to the outcome of Security Council deliberations. However, there should be clear guidelines regarding their participation. In particular, their reports not only should be circulated to

members of the Security Council, but also should be made available to other Member States, especially when a report makes allegations against a Member State in some way.

Lastly, I welcome the Secretary-General's decision to establish a trust fund to enhance the capacity of non-governmental organizations at the country level to engage with Governments on issues regarding the work of the United Nations.

Mr. Gopala Menon (Singapore): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to reaffirm Singapore's full support for you. My predecessor worked with the last three Presidents of the Assembly as a facilitator in this area of work. Singapore has always tried to play a constructive role in the ongoing deliberations on the revitalization of the General Assembly, and we will continue to do likewise at the current session.

I was told that, last year, the question of the relevance of the United Nations dominated many discussions, for reasons that are fully understandable. I am encouraged that that question no longer holds centre stage and that the debate has moved on to how we can best deal with the threats, challenges and change with which we are confronted.

For small States like Singapore, the effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations are of paramount importance. In that regard, the role of the General Assembly — as the principal norm-making organ of the United Nations — cannot be overestimated. If we were to take away the United Nations and its associated framework of international law, a new world order would emerge based on the law of the jungle. That kind of a world would be less favourable for many countries.

The United Nations will soon be turning 60. In some ways, it is an irony that United Nations Headquarters is in New York. Here, amid gleaming ultramodern buildings equipped with the latest technology, United Nations Headquarters is an antique that does not even have a sprinkler system from the fourth floor upwards. If the chief executive officer of one of the leading international companies based in New York were to spend a short time with us as a representative to experience how the United Nations works, he or she would probably suffer a tremendous shock.

As with this building, with the passage of time come other problems associated with ageing. Just as old equipment and systems are often jettisoned in favour of new and better equipment, old ways of doing things need to be constantly re-evaluated. Unfortunately, old habits die hard. Both the working methods of the Assembly and the substance of our discussions can at times be disconnected from developments in the real world outside, and that in turn raises questions about the relevance of the Assembly.

Notwithstanding the inefficient way in which we often go about doing our business, Singapore is realistic enough to recognize that the United Nations cannot simply jettison overnight the way in which it operates. A physical building can be refurbished or even completely rebuilt if its occupants can temporarily relocate elsewhere. Unfortunately, in the work of the Organization, we cannot call a time out to overhaul our working methods and then start anew on an entirely revamped way of working. Moreover, unlike the case of a business enterprise, where the power to make decisions resides in the top man or a few top executives, the power to make decisions in the General Assembly resides with its 191 sovereign Member States — a situation that is not always conducive to the taking of quick decisions. Since we cannot tear down the Assembly and rebuild it from scratch, we can renovate it room by room, consulting and trying to achieve an agreement among its 191 co-owners, even as we continue with our work. That is the only realistic way to proceed with revitalization of the General Assembly and, for that matter, with any other aspect of United Nations reform.

Too often, we hear the complaint that the locus of power and decision-making has shifted in the past 10 to 15 years from the Assembly to the Security Council. In that regard, it might be useful to recall that, unlike the case of the League of Nations, the architects of the United Nations deliberately set out to differentiate the functions of the Assembly from those of the Security Council. As the chairman of the responsible committee at the San Francisco Conference asserted in 1945:

> "The strength of the future world Organization rests on perfect equilibrium between the functions of the Assembly and those of the Security Council. Neither of these two bodies should try to dominate the other nor trespass on the other's peculiar sphere of activities and responsibilities ... The Assembly, as the supreme

> representative body of the world, is to establish the principles on which world peace and the ideal of solidarity must rest; and, on the other hand, the Security Council is to act in accordance with those principles and with the speed necessary to prevent any attempted breach of international peace and security. In other words, the former [the Assembly] is a creative body and the latter [the Security Council] an organ of action."

But, in fact, from the very inception of the United Nations, there was a breakdown of this concept of specialization, with the General Assembly encroaching on the Security Council's peculiar sphere. That was largely the result of the cold war, which often paralysed decision-making in the Security Council, resulting in almost every major political problem being transferred to and deliberated in the Assembly. Some of us might view that period — stretching from the birth of the United Nations up to the 1990s — as the glory days of the General Assembly, but that was not how things were meant to be. Hence, the end of the cold war was a rude awakening for some of us. That does not mean that the Assembly must now settle for a lesser role than that of the Council. But it does mean at least three things.

First, it is important that the Assembly and the Security Council work in tandem, not at cross-purposes. We cannot have the two co-pilots of an aircraft trying to take it in different directions. That would be disastrous for all of us. When decisions are taken by the Security Council or by the General Assembly — especially by consensus — we should look for ways to reaffirm that position in other organs of the United Nations.

Secondly, so that the General Assembly flag can fly high, the Assembly should identify niche areas or issues on which it can make a significant contribution. Of course, that is easier said than done, but there are global problems or clusters of issues such as infectious diseases, illegal migration, the environment, terrorism and human rights — just to name a few — on which the views of the entire membership could be brought to bear in shaping international opinion and positions. Here, I am confident that everyone — including the major Powers — would deem it in their interests to promote a major role for the General Assembly. The fact is that globalization has also globalized the problems of poverty, terrorism and disease, and it will be not only the poor and small countries that will suffer. If the sense of injustice and unfairness becomes too great, the problems of the Third World will become those of the First World in one way or another. So we have no choice but to work together. What better forum to use than the Assembly, where almost every country in today's world is represented?

Thirdly, I see two impediments preventing the General Assembly from moving towards dealing with niches of common concern: its bloated agenda and its culture of rituals, which place heavy demands on our time and resources without significant results.

With regard to the first impediment, I am not sure how many more inches we can trim from the Assembly's waistline. Every agenda item represents the vested interest of a Member State or group of Member States, and that includes both developed and developing countries. How much longer they remain on the Assembly's agenda will depend on whether we can ultimately achieve a satisfactory resolution of the issues and conflicts, some of which are as old as the United Nations itself. Nevertheless, I hope that, through a spirit of compromise, we can further lighten our workload.

We should also shake up the annual high-level general debate, which has settled into a two-week ritual that cannot sustain international media attention. In that regard, I would like to draw particular attention to the recommendation in resolution 58/126 that the President-elect of the General Assembly, in consultation with the incumbent President and the Secretary-General, suggest a theme or issue of global concern for Member States to comment upon during the general debate at the start of each session. If we can get our leaders to focus their speeches on the important issues of the day, we may be better able to mobilize the Assembly to serve as a court of international opinion.

In summary, we will need to constantly identify ways in which to make the Assembly the creative body that the architects of the United Nations set out to make in San Francisco in 1945. To do that, we must be audacious but realistic in our approach.

I would next like to briefly address the issue of expanding United Nations-civil society relations. The two reports prepared on this topic — the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354) and the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons (A/58/817 and Corr.1) —

provide much food for thought. I would like to make four preliminary observations.

First, Singapore agrees in principle that the United Nations should be a forward-looking organization and that there is merit in the United Nations expanding its consultations with different constituencies, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We agree that certain NGOs have expertise in specific areas of our work, for example on environmental, human rights, disarmament and development issues. They have often contributed to a better understanding of complex issues and have added to the richness of our debates. However, it is also a fact that there are NGOs that do not add any real value to the work of the United Nations. Judging from past experience, it would be difficult for us to differentiate between NGOs that can add value to our deliberations and those that cannot.

Secondly, it follows that we need to ask how best to involve NGOs in our deliberations. In that regard, the proposal to accredit NGOs to the Main Committees of the General Assembly needs careful consideration. We have to bear in mind that once we embark on that course, it would be difficult to reverse the situation. As the representative of Australia pointed out in his statement earlier today, while a greater dialogue with NGOs may be of value, it should not detract from the fundamental intergovernmental character of the Assembly. Whatever we do, we must ensure that the decisions of the United Nations are made by Member States and not by NGOs.

Thirdly, I submit that, notwithstanding the financial support envisaged by the Secretary-General for NGOs from developing countries, the playing field will not necessarily be level. What guarantee is there that the trust fund will not dry up after an initial phase, and with it access for NGOs from developing countries to attend United Nations meetings? Regarding the enlargement of the Partnerships Office, the Secretary-General has pointed out that it would have modest budgetary implications. In this day and age of competing mandates and finite resources, something would have to give. Who would then decide what is to go and what will stay?

Fourthly, based on Singapore's experience, especially during our stint on the Security Council, I submit that the NGOs that matter often know whom to work with and how to get their viewpoints across. We had good working relations with a wide range of NGOs that added value to the work of the Security Council. In a way, that automatically separates the wheat from the chaff. Even as we look for ways to help NGOs gain better access to our deliberations, we should not neglect to provide similar assistance to Member States that need it in order to better participate in the work of the United Nations.

In conclusion, it is important to address some of these questions and concerns and to examine carefully the implications of the Cardoso Panel's proposals before taking any action.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I extend to you, Sir, my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you presiding over this meeting of the General Assembly to consider two items of great importance.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. We would like to add some comments to complement that statement.

We must undertake without further delay a genuine reform of the United Nations that restores its original roots and ensures proper respect for the Charter by all Member States, large and small. The strengthening and the reform of the United Nations should have the goal of restoring the Organization's central position in the system of international relations, ensuring the rule of international law and the United Nations Charter, rebuilding the system of collective security and ensuring the development of multilateralism and cooperation among States.

Multilateralism should not be reinterpreted by some in a capricious and opportunistic manner. Rather, it should be defended by all Member States, because multilateralism depends on full respect for international law and the practice of democracy in international relations. It is becoming increasingly clear that if we want to restore the international community's confidence in the United Nations and, in particular, to restore the Organization's credibility before international public opinion, we must ensure that the Organization truly acts in the collective interest of its Member States.

United Nations reform should be general and comprehensive. It should encompass and democratize

all the principal and subsidiary organs. The main pillar of reform should be the preservation of the universal, democratic and intergovernmental character of the Organization. In that context, it is necessary to respect the functions and the prerogatives that the Charter entrusts respectively to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council for the purposes stated in the Charter. Interference by the Security Council in the areas of competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should come to an end. Now more than ever, the Security Council requires thorough reform, including its urgent democratization.

As well, the political issues of the Organization, including the issue of reform itself, should not be subordinated to management and administrative concepts.

Likewise, we should not subordinate the political issues of the Organization, including this very exercise, to their managerial and administrative aspects. The implementation of a transnational corporation approach with a narrow cost-benefit criterion contradicts the very nature of the Organization, given its universal and democratic character, its political essence and intergovernmental aspect.

In this regard, Sir, I wish briefly to refer to the report of the Secretary-General submitted in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations under the item "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

This document should be carefully examined by Member States, since the initiatives set forth in it could have enormous impact on the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations, as well as on the original mandates of the system's funds, agencies and programmes. Although some proposals found in the text could have a positive effect on the work of the Organization, for instance that of urging other agencies, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, to promote greater participation of civil society in their activities, other proposals have to do with budgets, concepts and methodologies that are very far from enjoying intergovernmental consensus.

This is the reason why the implementation of any of the initiatives outlined in the report of the Secretary General will require a clear legislative mandate by Member States.

The revitalization of the General Assembly also constitutes a determining element within the real reform of the United Nations. We cannot speak of an Organization able to act more democratically and effectively, as long as the General Assembly does not fully exercise the powers entrusted to it by the Charter. Those include the powers that necessarily should derive from the Charter in the event of a stalemate where the Security Council fails to reject the use of force for political ends, and where it does not insist on the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the elimination of double standards in order to achieve security, stability, justice and democracy in the world.

Resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, adopted during the previous session of the General Assembly under the leadership of President Julian Hunte, add to the legislative arsenal needed for the revitalization of this main body. Hence, all the relevant resolutions that have already been adopted continue to be mandatory points of reference.

The revitalization process should have as its final goal the reaffirmation of the central role of the General Assembly as the main body for deliberation and the adoption of policies, and for representation within the United Nations, as acknowledged in the Millennium Declaration.

Thus, this Assembly should maintain its independent nature and role in this process as a forum for wide-ranging debate, where Member States are not restricted or limited when referring to the issues that are of interest to them. The executive capacity of the General Assembly should not be weakened either.

This is why, in our opinion, during the current session and under your leadership, Mr. President, we feel that we should give priority to the component of revitalization aimed at consolidating the authority of this Assembly. Resolution 58/126 itself includes, in section "A" of its annex, measures whose full and urgent implementation would allow such consolidation.

At the same time, actions aimed at improving the working methods of the Assembly should not erode, but rather complement, efforts to restore its basic role. We should take this into account when implementing relevant resolutions, including resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We should also remember that no improvement in structure or function can compensate for the lack of political will of powerful States or the pernicious tendency towards unilateralism.

The United Nations agenda is in itself a political matter and the issues currently covered just at the plenary level have essential importance and sensitivity for most Member States. Thus, the rationalization of the choice of agenda items should not be based upon administrative or financial considerations. It must be a patient and democratic process of seeking consensus, which implies respect for the opinion of all Member States, especially of those most concerned and without whose approval no proposal for reorganization or improvement on a given item should be made at all.

The right of States to propose, in accordance with the rules of procedure and the Charter of the United Nations, the inclusion of new items in the agenda of the General Assembly, as well as their consideration in the necessary way and at the appropriate time, should not be affected either.

In quite a few cases, the continued existence of certain agenda items is mainly due to the fact that the relevant resolutions have not been implemented. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that the General Assembly is not the only main body with numerous agenda items. In fact, we have witnessed how the Security Council increases the number of agenda items it covers each year.

We also recall that the so-called conceptualization of the agenda, which has already been instituted, must not prejudge or influence the way the work of the General Assembly is organized or undertaken.

Likewise, efforts to revitalize the work of the Assembly's General Committee should be framed within the prerogatives assigned to it, pursuant to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

Actions aimed at revitalizing specifically the work of the Main Committees should comply with the general guidelines established at the plenary level, after a comprehensive consultation process among Member States.

In this regard, the recommendations to improve the working methods of the Main Committees, including recommendations for streamlining their respective working programmes, should also be based on comprehensive consultations and consensus. Such a process should be undertaken without detriment to current priorities and without neglecting traditional substantive issues.

We consider that the interpretation and implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 should not, by any means, limit the activity or impose conditions on the political debate or the ability of Member States to present initiatives within the Main Committees. Nor should we underestimate the value of the viewpoints of the smallest delegations, which are often unable to participate actively in all the segments, interactive debates and other meetings that may be scheduled in such subsidiary organs of the Assembly.

Likewise, we must not forget that the new initiatives of Assembly presidents and bureaux could set precedents for all the Main Committees and even for the plenary of the Assembly itself. Therefore, the presentation of such organizational initiatives should be an extremely careful exercise because of the implications that might be involved, including possible incongruities and contradictions with the very rules of procedure of the General Assembly. In our opinion, the so-called gradual implementation of new organizational measures in the Committees should not take place until there is a clear, negotiated governmental mandate on that issue.

Let us not deceive ourselves: the effectiveness of the work of the plenary and of the Committees will depend more on the political will of Member States than on changes in the working methods of the plenary and the Committees. In any case, they should not affect the mandates and priorities established in the Millennium Development Goals, the outcomes of the special sessions of the Assembly and of United Nations conferences and summits or the priorities contained in the medium-term plan.

In our opinion, the main problem currently lies in the lack of implementation of the many resolutions that the General Assembly has adopted, which constitute an important normative body but remain inert because their implementation depends on the political will of those States that have the political, military or economic power to do so. It seems normal, then, that that also happens with the many resolutions on United Nations reform, whose level of implementation is limited. However, with total realism, the General Assembly can set for itself the task of debating crucial and urgent international issues in order to adopt concrete, action-oriented resolutions.

Finally, my delegation reiterates that reform cannot be a merely bureaucratic process of adapting

what is left of the United Nations to the interests and whims of a few rich and powerful countries. Likewise, we hope that, as a result of this process, the interaction between the Secretariat and the General Assembly will be strengthened so that the former may respond more effectively to the mandates determined by Member States.

I conclude my statement, Mr. President, by wishing you every success in your work and reiterating that, in this complex but necessary process of reforming the Organization, you can count on the full availability and constructive participation of the delegation of Cuba.

Mr. Balestra (San Marino): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and reaffirm to you the full support of my country and my delegation.

San Marino has always considered the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly to be an imperative. The General Assembly, as the main organ of the United Nations, should remain the main forum for the international community to discuss relevant political issues. The international system has already established a wide range of technical and political organs to discuss issues that need expert attention.

The General Assembly's composition and the role it plays make it a unique organ of the United Nations. Those characteristics are the basis of its particular legitimacy, enabling it, on many issues in international politics, to obtain a global consensus that might hardly be attainable in other forums. The first objective of an organ with the characteristics of the General Assembly must be to make States feel that they are part of a global community, at least on major issues. To accomplish that function, the General Assembly should cooperate more frequently and constructively with other international actors, such as non-governmental organizations.

For that reason, my country welcomes the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/58/817 and Corr.1) and thanks the Deputy Secretary-General for her presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354) in response to it. Civil society and other stakeholders should be given more opportunities to express their views. Their comments and suggestions would represent an essential contribution to the Assembly's work.

San Marino believes that the General Assembly should develop its mandate effectively through the streamlining of the agenda and the limitation of the number of items in order to consider them in a deeper and more reflective manner. Limiting the number of issues does not mean to deprive the General Assembly of its power. On the contrary, it would all the Assembly to focus on its priorities as stated in the Millennium Declaration.

The Main Committees themselves would benefit from such a reduction, giving them the opportunity to concentrate on specific issues and adopt more incisive resolutions.

My delegation welcomes resolution 58/316. We are in favour of a great number of the points contained in it: in particular that of normally holding the meetings of the plenary session on Mondays and Thursdays; organizing the agenda under headings corresponding to the priorities of the Organization in order to give a sense of structure to the work of the Assembly; biennializing and triennializing the agenda items; rationalizing the work of the Main Committees and reducing the volume of documentation submitted by the Secretariat.

Nevertheless, we believe that the resolutions adopted to date represent merely a first step in the revitalization process. In our opinion, the General Committee should be strengthened in such a way as to become an effective means of facilitating the work of the Assembly. It should play an important role in determining how to reduce the number of agenda items, suggest alternative ways to discuss them and, in particular, be used as an instrument for involving all delegations in informal negotiations.

We also believe that the implementation of resolutions should become even more important than their adoption. We deem it vital to create a system by which the General Assembly is informed of the degree of implementation and impact of its resolutions. With such a system, we might be able to avoid adopting the same resolutions over and over again.

Mr. Sharma (India): We are pleased to participate in this joint debate on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system. We thank

the Secretary-General for the detailed documentation presented under the two agenda items. We express our appreciation for the introductory statement made by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette.

The position of the Non-Aligned Movement has already been outlined by Algeria. We would like to focus on some of the broader issues surrounding the two agenda items.

My delegation congratulates you, Mr. President, on the commitment that you bring to the process of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system. We would like to place on record our appreciation for the positive strides made on those issues under the leadership of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We will work constructively with you, Mr. President, and we wish you every success in your endeavours in that regard.

The process of reform and revitalization is necessarily a slow and measured one; we cannot expect results overnight. We need patience and perseverance in our efforts to build agreement among all Member States on issues that often involve sensitive political questions. The strong, steady and purposeful forward movement of a ship perhaps characterizes the approach that we need to adopt in this process.

We made considerable progress in the previous session, which involved several rounds of consultations and informal discussions. Progress was made in categorizing items under broad headings, in streamlining to some extent the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly and in the biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items of the agenda of the General Assembly. Resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2003 and July 2004, respectively, contain some important steps forward.

We recognize, however, that those steps are essentially the first steps. The ultimate objective of the reform process is to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization in its responsiveness to the needs of Member States, especially developing countries. The progress in attempts to reform and revitalize the United Nations system will be judged by its adaptation to the efforts of developing countries to achieve the targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals. Simultaneously, the reform process will be judged by the effectiveness of the response of the United Nations to the global challenges posed by the threats of international terrorism; weapons of mass destruction, including the question of nuclear proliferation and disarmament; and transnational organized crime, involving the trafficking in narcotics, weapons and human persons.

We have a long way ahead of us in reaching our objective. We hope that the High-Level Panel set up by the Secretary-General to report on the threats and challenges faced by the United Nations and the changes necessary in its institutions and processes, will produce recommendations that we are able to implement. We hope that the intergovernmental consideration of the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the Panel's report will give us the opportunity to view the process in a holistic manner, thereby enabling us to make reforms in various parts of the United Nations system. In the long term, the reforms will be enduring if the different elements of the processes move in the same direction.

The reform process that we are attempting to establish must eventually enhance the prestige, authority and effectiveness of the General Assembly and its ability to deliberate on and review policy. That will have to be done in practice, through concrete action. As an important first step, the restoration of the prestige and effectiveness of the General Assembly could be brought about by returning the thematic debates currently being held in the Security Council to the General Assembly, where they rightly belong. Members of the Security Council belonging to the Group of 77 or sympathetic to the views of the vast majority of the developing countries concerning the primacy of the General Assembly have a major role to play in that respect. The terms of interaction between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council operate without difficulties. But consideration would have to be given to the occasional anomalies that arise in the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Office of the President of the General Assembly has, over the last year, been strengthened with additional manpower, and it would be useful to review the contribution that has been made to the working of that Office. Similarly, an evaluation of the functioning of the General Assembly following the many innovative changes brought about since the beginning of this session would be a useful

exercise and would help us choose the direction for the future.

The volume of paper in the United Nations has been notorious indeed. Those who have come to cope with the enormous quantities of documents and resolutions, with only a few people at their disposal in their missions, can best testify to the strangulating effect that the paperwork can impose. Even larger missions find it difficult to keep abreast of the documentation. The documents are crisper now, but the Secretariat needs to continue focusing on making documentation more manageable and user-friendly.

Rationalization and simplification of the language used in the resolutions would also be useful. Rationalization of the language or of the number of resolutions will, of course, be possible only with the cooperation of Member States.

It is important in the process of reform not to overlook the rules of procedure already adopted and available to us. The strict observance of the rules of procedure should not be compromised in the revitalization process. It is also essential to remember the intergovernmental character of the Organization. Interactions with civil society or other outside bodies undertaken for making the proceedings more broad-based should be done only within the framework of assisting the intergovernmental deliberations and with the objective of increasing the quality of intergovernmental decision-making.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354). As the report of the Secretary-General has become available only very recently, my delegation has not had sufficient time to reflect on the proposals made by the Secretary-General. We would, therefore, wish to express our preliminary views on the subject.

Our consideration of the recommendations of the Cardoso Panel and the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Panel is complicated by ambiguity on the definition of civil society, in the report. The definition used by the Panel is at some variance with the elements of civil society identified earlier by the Secretary-General and with what has come to be commonly understood by the term.

We do not believe that parliamentarians form a part of civil society; nevertheless, the proposal to engage parliamentarians in a more intensive manner in the work of the United Nations is welcome. Their sustained interaction and association with issues of global significance can only help in improving legislation and implementation of policies within their own countries. The idea of local authorities being a part of civil society is incongruous by any standard. While local authorities are a key element in implementation, they can hardly be identified as civil society.

The proposal to establish a trust fund to increase the participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from developing countries has considerable merit and deserves further consideration. The sustained efforts of the United Nations system have resulted in significant increases in the number of participating NGOs from developing countries in recent years. The situation still needs further improvement. The creation of a trust fund will be a positive contribution to the process. However, clear criteria in establishing the trust fund, particularly with regard to donations that are unconditional in nature, will be important for its success.

We wish to address in greater detail two important issues discussed in the report. The first is the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the General Assembly. Although the Secretary-General states that "There is considerable merit in opening the regular work of the Assembly to increased participation by accredited NGOs" (*A/59/354, para. 25*), a convincing case has not been made for that. The nature of the participation and the benefits to be derived from it are not apparent, and we are not persuaded that it would benefit the United Nations or its Member States. It would also militate against both the intergovernmental principle and the principle of democratic representation, since civil-society NGOs, in strict meaning of the term, have not been elected.

Further, the interpretation that there is nothing in Article 71 of the United Nations Charter that would preclude the General Assembly from inviting non-governmental organizations to participate in its sessions is a disingenuous legal interpretation, which seems to be part of a growing trend.

In our view, the provisions of the Charter and its Article 71 are very clear. The Charter, through Article 71, determines that the principal relationship between

the United Nations and civil society will be through the Economic and Social Council. We would be hesitant to tamper with the Charter of the United Nations and would caution against its fallacious interpretation for the sake of convenience or expediency.

The second issue which merits comment is the granting of accreditation to non-governmental organizations. The Secretary-General suggests that the General Committee of the General Assembly could be designated for the accreditation process for applications for consultative status. In our understanding, that would only be applicable if non-governmental organizations were to participate in the work of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General refers to the comments of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations concerning the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. The comments of the Panel are somewhat disappointing in regard to the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. The question has been dealt with at a superficial level. There was a lack of adequate consultations with members of the Committee, resulting in a lack of understanding of the work of the Committee, and with the wider community of Member States on the usefulness of the Committee's work. That is indeed regrettable as the opportunity to make meaningful proposals to reform and streamline the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for further improving the accreditation process of non-governmental organizations has been lost.

Several proposals are discussed in the Secretary-General's report with regard to country-level engagement with non-governmental organizations. Due diligence must be exercised to ensure that the mandates of the various United Nations bodies are not exceeded. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that Governments are the main interlocutors of the United Nations system at the country level.

We shall provide more details of our views on the reports of the Secretary-General and the Cardoso Panel during further discussions.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): I take the floor to address the Report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354) under agenda item 54, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system". Allow me to commend the Secretary-General for the report before us, and to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for introducing it.

With regard to agenda item 52, my delegation fully subscribes to the statement made by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which we are a member.

At the outset, let me indicate that my delegation agrees with the Secretary-General when he stresses that "The United Nations is and will remain an intergovernmental organization at which decisions are taken by its Member States" (*A/59/354, para. 3*).

At the United Nations, Governments represent their constituencies, which include civil society, and we are mandated by them to take decisions on their behalf. The ongoing debate about enhancing the role of civil society in the work of the United Nations unfortunately suggests that national Governments are not representative enough and that civil society takes up the unfulfilled part of the mandate. Assuming that any gaps in representation exist, what needs to be done is to strengthen consultations at the national level. Whatever measures are taken in the ongoing process of the modernization and the institutional change of the United Nations should therefore ensure that its essential character as an intergovernmental organization is maintained.

Regrettably, over the years, there has been a growing and determined tendency to undermine that position. We have witnessed numerous attempts to change or seek ways to circumvent the established rules of procedure of the Assembly and of other intergovernmental processes in favour of civil society, even before the need to do so has been established. In some cases, progress in deliberative processes had been threatened, as some delegations and groups have insisted on a kind of inclusiveness that had not been previously agreed upon. It is our hope that this debate will clarify the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations.

In the past, non-governmental and other civil society organizations have participated in the work of the General Assembly in a variety of ways, such as during special sessions, round-table meetings and preparatory processes for international conferences. However, the practice has been that they do not participate in plenary meetings of the Assembly. We

have not been provided with any compelling reasons why that practice should change.

The report recognizes that civil society organizations in different parts of the world are at different levels of development and that something needs to be done to bridge the gap. In this regard, we welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to create a trust fund to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from developing countries in intergovernmental meetings, in the hope that that would make a difference. According to the report, 70 per cent of NGOs having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council come from developed countries, while the remaining 30 per cent have their headquarters in developing countries. Under those circumstances, the calls to increase NGO participation in intergovernmental processes unfortunately translate into demands for an increase in the voice of the developed world. Evidently, this issue needs to be properly thought through, as it has ramifications for the issue of democracy in international governance.

On the question of accreditation, the Secretary-General has acknowledged the work done by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to improve its efficiency, including through the introduction of a paperless committee. We therefore find the reasons put forward for disbanding the Committee unconvincing. In addition to granting certain defined rights to approved organizations, the Committee is an indispensable tool that serves to ensure that those organizations recognize their responsibilities and are held accountable for their actions. We also wish to observe that the whole process of accreditation, including the so-called pre-screening of applications, must remain the responsibility of Member States.

The report speaks of the need to enhance country-level engagement with NGOs and to enhance the capacity of NGOs at the same level. There is merit in that proposal, particularly with regard to the capacity of NGOs in developing countries. However, it should be made clear that such engagement and capacity-building should be done only with the full involvement and participation of the national Governments concerned. Care should be taken to ensure that the United Nations is not seen to be engaging in practices and activities that amount to interference in the internal affairs of Member States.

Regarding the engagement of parliamentarians in the work of the United Nations, my delegation is supportive of the proposal for support meetings before important intergovernmental meetings and of holding such meetings at the national, regional and international levels. The outcomes of such meetings would indeed enrich the deliberative processes at the intergovernmental level.

Let me conclude by observing that this report appears to have been informed only by the need to justify and institutionalize greater civil society involvement in the work of the United Nations and not by the need to improve the basis upon which the relationship is formed. We note that the report is silent about the concerns of Governments regarding this issue. Questions have been raised about the growing numbers, motives, representativeness, integrity and accountability of civil society organizations in the United Nations. The report ignores those serious issues, preferring only to discuss increasing civil society participation. We hope that those issues will be addressed before, and not after, discussion of the modalities for enhancing civil society involvement.

Mr. Herasymenko (Ukraine): First of all, let me warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. You may rest assured of Ukraine's full support of your efforts to make the activities of the General Assembly during the current session successful and effective.

The fact that we taking up the discussion of agenda item 52, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", and agenda item 54, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", at the very beginning of the fifty-ninth session, immediately after the general debate, testifies to the importance of those items for the international community. It is encouraging to acknowledge that we have achieved considerable success in our work on these issues in the past two years.

I would like to commend the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, Mr. Julian Hunte, and the six facilitators, whose tireless efforts helped us to achieve progress on the reform and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. That progress reaffirms our joint commitment to the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of

the United Nations and reaffirms our desire to enable it to play that role effectively.

That should be the ultimate goal and major direction of the ongoing process of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Although many of us would like to see bolder steps to give new breath to the Assembly, in the current circumstances we consider it appropriate to focus our efforts on those proposals that could gain the wide support of the United Nations membership and that can be realistically expected to be implemented in the near future.

Ukraine welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which were important steps forward. They set out a number of practical proposals aimed at enhancing the authority and the role of the General Assembly and improving its working methods. Their important feature — establishing defined time frames — has greatly contributed to the implementation of many of their provisions and laid down the framework for further consideration of others, including during this session of the Assembly.

We are pleased to see that those resolutions are already at work. Let me just mention the new organization of agenda items under headings that correspond to the priorities of the work of the United Nations. A number of items have been streamlined, and that effort should continue, in consultation with Member States and under agreed principles. Among other things, we believe it is also necessary to streamline the routine speeches delivered in this Hall.

Ukraine fully supports the decision to strengthen the Office of the President. It goes without saying that regular consultations of the President of the General Assembly with the Presidents of the Security Council and Economic and Social Council, as well as with representatives of regional and other groups, would be very helpful to better plan and organize the work of the General Assembly. In that regard, we would also like to stress that it would be useful for the current President of the General Assembly to maintain close and regular contacts with the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly, so that he can take full advantage of its members' experience and advice. We hope that that idea will receive positive consideration in the course of further discussions during this session.

We should not lose the momentum of reform. To a large extent our hopes in that regard rely on your leadership, Mr. President, and you may count on the full support and understanding of my delegation in your efforts to achieve tangible results. I would like to assure you that Ukraine, whose representative is chairing the Third Committee, is fully committed to translating the decisions on this issue into practice.

Regarding agenda item 54, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", the Secretary-General in his latest report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), said: "The implementation of my agenda for further change, submitted to the General Assembly two years ago, is now largely complete" (para. 255). He further reports that the recent review conducted by the General Accountability Office of the United States Government estimated that 85 per cent of the reforms proposed in the 1997 and 2002 reform packages had been either fully or partly implemented. Those statistics are quite clear. I wish to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose tireless efforts in promoting the reforms in the United Nations since assuming the office deserve not only our words of praise, but, first and foremost, our active support. That support will be necessary in order to achieve progress in implementing the remaining reform measures during the current session.

In that regard, I would like to welcome the submission of the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/58/817 and Corr.1), chaired by the former President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, as well as the Secretary-General's report in response to the Panel's recommendations (A/59/354). Indeed, the effectiveness and relevance of the Organization can only increase if we find appropriate ways to strengthen the involvement and participation of civil society in it.

Finally, I would like to underline that, along with the revitalization of the General Assembly and strengthening of the United Nations in many areas, we need to push forward with Security Council reform. Advancing the reform of the Economic and Social Council, through strengthening its coordinating role in the economic and social spheres, also should not be put on the backburner of our agenda. We are looking forward to the outcome of the work of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and will actively engage in its consideration.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to extend to you, Mr. President,

the congratulations of my delegation. We are sure that under your able leadership during this session the General Assembly will have a successful outcome. I would also like to assure you that Ecuador is prepared to cooperate with you and to make a constructive contribution on the matters of greatest priority for the United Nations. One of those matters is the subject we are dealing with today. We know of your ability and we have no doubt, therefore, that the results of your stewardship will be extremely positive for the Organization.

My delegation associates itself with what was said by the representative of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and also what was said by the representative of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group.

We reaffirm our conviction of the need for the General Assembly to reassume the importance and the role for which it was created. As the most important democratic deliberative body on the planet — where each Member State has a voice and a vote — it is imperative to give it the necessary capability to lead the international community. Clearly, since its creation more than half a century ago, there have been historic changes that have made it necessary — and I would even say vital — for the General Assembly to reform its procedures and efficiency so that it can confront the challenges of a changing international situation.

In the absence of political decisions by Members in the General Assembly, other organs have had to play an increasingly important role. That absence of political will has been seen in the lack of decision-making ability and an immense agenda — often loaded down with repetitive and irrelevant items. All of this means that the General Assembly is not taking up the historic challenge of reflecting a dynamic international policy for today. Often, that incapacity has meant that subjects that could have been dealt with in this forum have not been. Member States need to realize that the General Assembly is a debate and reconciliation mechanism devised for the benefit of our peoples. The international community, therefore, requires us to bring about a substantive revitalization of a system that is failing it.

The approval, at the previous session, of resolution 58/316 constitutes the result of very difficult negotiations and it encourages us to continue working with steadfast responsibility to implement its mandate.

We are grateful for the achievements of the former President of the General Assembly, Julian Hunte, on this issue. We realize, however, that a lot more remains to be done. During this session, Members need to examine the question of reprogramming of the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. By April 2005 the Main Committees are to present to the General Assembly for its consideration their analysis on the need, frequency and importance of each of the subjects they are considering. Those recommendations from those specialists will be of fundamental importance in helping us to rationalize the workload, which itself needs to be reviewed with greater attention.

Resolution 58/316 only removed two subjects from the workload, subjects that do not even amount to 1 per cent of the total. That is of concern. We recognize that this is a sensitive subject for many delegations; however, it is also true that the programme of work of the General Assembly should be a true reflection of the current state of relations among States in the international community.

We also hope that the changes introduced with regard to the Bureau will serve to strengthen the progress of work in the General Assembly.

I would like to conclude by reflecting on the importance of the deliberations of the General Assembly with regard to the work of the High-level Panel, convened by the Secretary-General to examine threats, challenges and change. A report from that Panel will be submitted for consideration by Member States in December and undoubtedly will propose a fundamental revision of the architecture of international relations. The General Assembly will have to study that report and take decisions to confront the challenges before the United Nations, to which I referred previously. The relevance of the United Nations, which has been questioned so much in recent days, will be in the hands of the representatives gathered together here. We must remember that international society will be taking a very close look at the deliberations taking place in this Hall.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): In taking the floor for the first time here at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Mr. President, I would like to express to you our great pleasure and pride at seeing you preside over our work. Your outstanding qualities of statesmanship, your many

years of experience as a diplomat and your superb understanding of people guarantee the value of your presidency's contribution to the work of the Assembly. We are pleased that, under your guidance, the General Assembly is today continuing the debate begun at its forty-sixth session on its revitalization and the strengthening of its authority. Cameroon associates itself with the statement made by Algeria this morning on behalf on the Non-Aligned Movement.

The debate begun this morning is an important exercise because it deals with the functioning of an essential body that is in fact the cornerstone of multilateralism. Indeed, the General Assembly, for some, is a forum in which to harmonize the efforts of States to implement the principles and purposes of the United Nations. For others, it is a body that expresses the collective and universal conscience. For yet others, it is a body endowed with a kind of moral authority, manifested through abilities that are as extensive as they are diverse.

After more than a decade of slow and patient negotiating, we have now made some progress. The most significant step was the adoption at the fifty-eighth session of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. Allow me here to pay heartfelt tribute to your predecessor, Julian Hunte, who, through his flexibility, tenacity and courage, as well as his wisdom, made that adoption possible. In so doing, he made a valuable contribution to the success of the mission that our heads of State entrusted to us at the Millennium Summit — that of reforming our Organization and improving its effectiveness in meeting the great concerns of the United Nations family.

The resolutions adopted last year will indeed be considered landmarks in our quest for an Assembly with enhanced authority, a greater role to play, and better working methods, both within its Bureau and in the main Committees. The decisions taken on the agenda, as well as those relating to the Economic and Social Council, are ample testimony to this fact. In fact, the agenda, which expresses the concerns of the Millennium Summit, will now be organized around the Organization's priorities for the period of 2002 to 2005, and those priorities dovetail with the initial goals of the founders of the United Nations.

This categorization and restructuring, we believe, has numerous advantages. Let us take note here of two of these advantages. The first advantage is that the agenda is thus further rationalized and, we believe, will help us to better cope with the numerous old and new challenges facing us. The second advantage is that this new structure imposes much more consistency and cohesion in how we deal with the questions before the General Assembly. Indeed, the Main Committees will no longer have to deal with the items sent to them as independent questions — or as questions per se — but rather will be able to examine them in the context of our Organization's responsibility to provide answers to the major concerns facing mankind.

Under the resolutions adopted last year, the report of the Economic and Social Council and those of the other principal bodies will be considered in their entirety at the plenary. My country welcomes this, since it in fact entails a reaffirmation of the practice begun by the General Assembly in 2001 when Cameroon was presiding over the Economic and Social Council. That decision is particularly important now, as the General Assembly's authority continues to shrink the more its services are in demand, as a result of the extremely subtle interference of other bodies with restricted membership. The Member States, to ensure that this decision is fully effective, must see to it that this review is no longer merely an opportunity for a string of general statements but, rather, produces recommendations that will provide fuel for thought for the later work of the Council or be useful to the Bureau for purposes of follow-up. That consideration must involve — and this is not yet the case — a very high number of States. These remarks, though intended for the consideration of the report of Economic and Social Council, are also valid for the General Assembly's consideration, under article XV of the Charter, of the reports of other principal United Nations organs, including those of the Secretary-General, as head of the Secretariat, and the Security Council. We will have an opportunity in due time to return to that issue when we consider those reports.

This concept of debate naturally assumes that the Bureau will provide stronger leadership. This is why we wish to see a continuation of consultations regarding its enhancement. Along the same lines, consultations should continue on proposals aimed at developing a new schedule for the work of the General Assembly for two substantive periods. This means, Mr. President, that your universally recognized qualities will be, in the days and months to come, most valuable for us in finding solutions to all these issues,

as well as to pending issues. Here, more than ever before, I believe, you will need boldness and wisdom. As Horace said, *sapere aude*: dare to be wise. You can count on the continuing support of my delegation.

The various proposals before us, including those in the document introduced this morning by the Deputy Secretary-General, will also be of valuable assistance to you. Moreover, I would like to express here to the Deputy Secretary-General our great appreciation for her introductory statement, which was most enlightening.

I would now like to make a few general comments on the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. This is indeed the proper place to congratulate this Panel, presided over by Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, for the high quality of the recommendations contained in his most useful report. Two years ago, the Secretary-General, in his report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), rightly referred to the growing importance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as players in international society. He also emphasized the interest that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) increasingly have in the work of the United Nations and warmly welcomed their high-quality participation in devising solutions to the challenges facing the international community.

I would like to recall here the role of NGOs in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, as well as their contributions to the success of major world conferences on the financing of development and on sustainable development. We had the opportunity to appreciate the relevance of their comments during the debates on poverty, investment, debt and economic growth.

It was natural and timely, therefore, to rationalize and strengthen the synergistic relationship between the United Nations system and the NGOs. Here, we are pleased to note that through the recent well-balanced review of existing practices, as well as the clear presentation of recommendations on the best way to promote that relationship, the Panel has brilliantly discharged the mission entrusted to it.

We believe, as does the Secretary-General, that in-depth consultations between the United Nations and NGOs, and the growing participation of NGOs in debates of global importance, can only serve to improve the quality of policy analysis. Partnership with NGOs will considerably facilitate the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the humanitarian areas, in combating poverty and in education — in a nutshell, in providing access for all to basic social services.

It is in this spirit that the Secretary-General in his report two years ago (A/57/1) emphasized the critical importance of such cooperation with the NGOs, given the need to respond to the complex social, economic, security and environmental challenges that exist today.

Overall, it is encouraging to note that such cooperation has continued to develop, witness the increased level of participation of NGOs in the deliberations and activities of the United Nations system.

In our view, some of the proposals for enhancing NGO participation, in terms of both quantity and quality, merit attention. This is particularly true with regard to the need to make significant resources available to facilitate the participation of NGOs from developing countries. Those NGOs require somewhat more time to become genuinely independent and responsible players.

That is why Cameroon, while presiding over the Economic and Social Council, supported the implementation of the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General for establishing a network of African NGOs with the objective of helping them to strengthen their capacities.

Other proposals, such as those regarding the accreditation of NGOs and their contribution and participation at the national level, have moved a little further forward as well.

Those are a few general comments that come to mind on a reading of the Cardoso report. We thank the Secretary-General for having given us some indication of how he intends to follow-up on those recommendations. We would also like to thank him for presenting States with ideas on policy-oriented action and decisions based on the report's recommendations. We think that we should continue to study this subject on the basis of this outstanding document and, clearly, our consultations in the days to come will be inspired by its conclusions. The report's very title attests to the faith that the world's peoples have in our Organization and their readiness to participate side by side with

States so that the United Nations will best and most effectively be able to meet the legitimate aspirations of mankind — a world free from fear and want.

Mrs. Holguín Cuéllar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment and assure you of the willingness of our delegation to help you in the work of the Assembly. We would like to repeat our support for the goal of strengthening the United Nations and we will actively participate in this debate in affirmation of its role in the multilateral system.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of his report on the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. We believe that working with civil society is important and should continue. We welcome the multifaceted interchange that is possible within the multilateral system. The main players in this relationship, however, are Member States, who are the creators of this Organization.

We wish to respect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations — that which gives this Organization its raison d'être. The United Nations, lets not forget, was created to bring together and strengthen States with the objective of peaceful coexistence and social and economic development. The dialogue with civil society is constructive because it strengthens the institutions of Member States; and the presence of stable States that are respectful of international law reinforces the multilateral system. Therefore, the dialogue should be transparent and we should actively involve States and non-governmental organizations.

In this respect, we do not agree with the idea presented in the report aimed at eliminating the current intergovernmental accreditation body for non-governmental organizations. The conclusions of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations reveal the coordinated and efficient work carried out by Member States. The current accreditation system is open to States and NGOs. A Secretariat-based system would not have such transparency and openness and would not be as open to Member States and NGOs from developing countries. We feel that transparency in the process of accreditation is fundamental, and that only a system managed by an intergovernmental body can guarantee this. We feel that any change in the current accreditation system and its scope should be the result of consultation and debate among Member States.

Although we feel that we should take a closer look at the proposal to connect the local and global levels, it is important to reiterate that the sovereignty of States, as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, is alive and well today. Any effort to act on the proposal must take into account the structures of Member States, which are the main connectors between the local and the global. This Organization belongs to the Member States and its agenda should be determined through debate among Member States.

The exchange between NGOs and the United Nations has gone on for many years. That exchange must complement the support function of the United Nations and the NGOs in helping Member States in their development. However, we feel that the main players in the United Nations system are Governments, and that should continue to be the case. We feel that States should continue to be fully engaged in their relationships with NGOs, and therefore we do not see the need to expand bureaucratic structures within the Secretariat for that purpose. We reiterate our availability to actively participate in the debate on the inclusion of NGOs in our work.

Mr. Sermoneta (Israel): Israel remains staunchly in favour of the ideas that lie behind these continuing ventures. Efficacy demands efficiency. In seeking to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, we will also strengthen the United Nations system; in turn, in seeking to strengthen the United Nations system, we cannot but revitalize the work of the General Assembly.

To work towards realizing our goals in such important areas as technology-based development issues, water issues, the promotion of good governance as the foundation for peace, and the strengthening of the United Nations capacity to fight terrorism, we must streamline our energies and avoid the practice of harping on the skewed obsession of a repetitive agenda.

In recent years, there have been some signs of improvement in that regard, in line with the Secretary-General's reports and the visions often enunciated by this Assembly. The number of joint debates is expanding — in itself a very important trend — but that still needs to continue further. There is no reason

for the same parties to endlessly discuss the same substantive material in the same forums.

Israel is still disappointed, however, by the automatic yearly repetition of resolutions without any regard to their usefulness or relevance. We would like to see a reduction in the overall number of resolutions, as well as a consolidation of resolutions into omnibus resolutions, as was the practice in the past. We would also welcome an increase in the number of resolutions that are considered on a biannual rather than on an annual basis. That would save time, money and paperwork. Clearly, any future attempt to add additional repetition to an already redundant agenda should be abandoned. Not only are such wastes of resources harmful to the proceedings and credibility of the United Nations; they are often harmful to the underlying issues as well.

Finally, towards those same worthwhile ends, Israel once again calls on the United Nations to review and improve the terms and conditions governing the accreditation and participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences. Just as inefficiencies in the agenda can subvert the United Nations work, so too can the hidden agendas of politicized outside bodies. In that context, Israel looks forward to closely examining the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, as well as the Secretary-General's report on their implementation.

In conclusion, Israel welcomes any and all efforts to strengthen the way that the United Nations works to meet its goals — to make it more efficient, more focused and more vital. The imperative is clear: The more our agenda possesses inefficiency, the more inefficiency will possess us.

Mr. Arifi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The irreversible changes that international relations have undergone since the end of the cold war, the increasingly unpredictable threats to international peace and security and the effects of rapid globalization, compounded by imperative development needs, present major challenges to our Organization today.

As was clearly illustrated in this year's general debate, United Nations reform has become an urgent need and sine qua non for restoring multilateralism and for endowing it with the strength, efficiency and credibility it requires in order to preserve peace and, in partnership, to guarantee the implementation of the objectives of sustainable development.

In his closing statement in the general debate, the President of the General Assembly noted that, of the 190 statements, 121 addressed the issue of United Nations reform, emphasizing both the progress achieved and the road that lies ahead. A considerable number of those statements were in fact replete with specific proposals urging us to continue improving the functioning and effectiveness of our Organization. The fertile debate and the promising ideas put forward therein should be better exploited and put to constructive use. Perhaps the Secretariat could prepare a compilation of the ideas and proposals suggested by various Member States. Such a compilation would spare us a repetitive debate and form the basis for a useful working paper for our ongoing work on that topic.

The unanimous appeal launched by our leaders to revisit and strengthen the architecture of the United Nations, an indispensable meeting place for all humankind, arose from the concern that the ineffectiveness of multilateralism in addressing those problems can only exacerbate the threat to peace, security and international stability. Thus, the creation of a comprehensive medium- and long-term reform plan is more imperative than ever.

The key element of that reform remains redressing the democratic deficit in the Security Council through an expanded membership that reflects, in a representative and equitable manner, the new geopolitical circumstances and takes the sociocultural dimension into consideration. Naturally, we eagerly await the options to be submitted by the Panel of Eminent Persons and hope that the international community will find a formula that does not exacerbate existing differences.

The Security Council must fully shoulder its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security. Its membership must better reflect the new realities of our world by providing a greater place for the developing countries and by being more equitably representative. In that context, an increase in the number of non-permanent seats, with a seat reserved for those States that contribute heavily to peacekeeping operations, is a necessity.

The Council's reform, and its enlargement in particular, should be seen, however, not as a mere

mathematical exercise, but as an ongoing and gradual process to include, within reasonable parameters, the elements of balance, rationalization, effectiveness and legitimacy. Such a process can succeed, of course, only if it is the product of all Member States represented at the highest level. In that context, the President of the General Assembly, with the assistance of a limited working group of his own choosing, could play a fundamental role in the process of consultation among various regional groups by preparing a framework for work to create greater visibility and to promote a possible decision to be taken during the sixtieth anniversary year. My country is ready effectively to contribute to that exercise and to provide all necessary support for its successful conclusion.

While the expansion of the Security Council is certainly a basic element of United Nations reform, we must not forget that the problem of reforming the international system is much broader than that. The General Assembly, our universal body par excellence, must face the challenges confronting the Organization. The revitalization process, already under way, must continue with a view to strengthening the authority of the General Assembly and to adapt its work to the increase in the number of its members, as well as to promote the development of modern communication and information technology.

The interdependence of peace and development requires interaction among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to create better coordination and synergy among those principal organs in dealing with the issues before them. The implementation of Article 24 of the United Nations Charter will contribute to achieving that goal. Indeed, under Article 24 the Security Council shall submit, periodically, special reports on questions of international interest to the General Assembly for its consideration.

Specific follow-up to the General Assembly's debate on the annual report of the Security Council is another measure which would help strengthen the role of the Assembly. Here, the Assembly should not confine itself merely to information-gathering, but rather should respond, after intensive consideration, by taking the necessary decisions.

The ever-growing importance of economic and social questions has bestowed a primary role on the Economic and Social Council, which in the future must play its development role as a generator of economic cooperation among States. Closer cooperation by the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) will certainly open up new prospects in drawing up development policies and strategies.

In that context, we welcome the efforts of the Secretariat in implementing the agenda for further change, which the Secretary-General submitted to us in 2002 (see A/57/387 and Corr.1). We welcome in particular the efforts to align United Nations activities with the priorities jointly defined at the Millennium Summit and the international conferences of the 1990s, as well as the significant reorganization of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Department of Public Information.

The development of partnerships between the United Nations and various non-State actors, including through greater participation of civil society and the private sector, will help to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations and enrich the debate.

Here, we wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to the conclusions of the recent report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354). We believe that strengthening the capacity of non-governmental organizations in developing countries should be a priority at the present stage.

In order to revitalize the United Nations system, we must all contribute to the process of reform and revitalization of the United Nations and its principal organs. The Panel of Eminent Persons could stimulate debate and fuel the process, particularly if it tackles the two key elements of the institutional architecture: peacekeeping centred on the Security Council, and the coordination of economic cooperation, centred on a body which would truly exercise that function in connection with the specialized agencies.

We hope that political will and a long-term vision will win the day.

Mr. Wiranataadmadja (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia would like to express its appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this joint debate, which is an opportunity to discuss the subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly.

The purpose of the debate is unquestionably to re-establish the role of the General Assembly. Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for her introduction to the debate. Before going further, my delegation also associates itself with the statement made this morning by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Indonesia welcomed the adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which were aimed at strengthening, revitalizing and reinvigorating the General Assembly in its role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations. Indonesia also appreciates the initiative and role of His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, in the process leading to their adoption. Those two resolutions indicate clearly that many issues remain to be resolved in the effort to enhance the authority and the role of the General Assembly, including in its relationship with other principal organs of the United Nations, namely the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. My delegation hopes that the forthcoming work will bring substantive progress in achieving a clearly defined relationship among those three principal organs, consistent with the Charter.

While the process of revitalization is far from over, Mr. President, my delegation believes that your skill and experience will yield progress on the issue. My delegation also hopes that the revitalization exercise will proceed even further and more substantively in the near future.

It is also important to stress that the strengthening of the United Nations system must be aimed at enabling the Organization to perform at optimal efficiency in order to deliver the benefits of development and peace. In that regard, any proposal by the Secretary-General should be considered within the context of the extent to which it could support the Organization's efforts in the development field.

That will require the Secretary-General to allocate more resources to development activities as well as first-rate staff to enable the Secretariat to deliver adequate services to Member States. In that context, we would like to emphasize the need to achieve equal geographical distribution and gender balance, particularly at the level of policy-making within the Secretariat, without compromising the excellence in the quality of personnel that is the strength of the Organization.

Finally, let me also touch upon the report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354). My delegation agrees that there is a need to make the United Nations a more outward-looking organization and to expand its dialogue with various constituencies and facilitate their input into the debate on issues of global significance.

In that connection, however, we would like to note that some of the proposals contained in the reports, such as those relating to the participation of non-governmental organizations in intergovernmental bodies, must be seriously and carefully considered before any action is taken. Such proposals appear difficult to operationalize, and would therefore have to be clearly defined. We look forward to discussing those proposals.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.